

So it would appear that the preservation of certain species of snakes and of monitor lizards is indispensable, especially if rodents are to be kept under control.

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[In Volume 49 of the *Journal* (p. 816) attention was drawn to a curious flaw in the Constitution Act, doubtless inadvertent, which prevents the provinces from legislating in connection with living creatures other than 'men, animals [which ostensibly means only mammals], birds and fish'. Therefore it would seem that the States cannot enact protective legislation for crocodiles, snakes and lizards, as well as for other forms of animal life. Though their skins bring in foreign exchange, these reptiles are being killed off without any attempt being made to understand or appreciate the repercussions which their removal may produce. There is no doubt that without this natural check rats and mice will increase and do immense damage to agriculture. The problem requires immediate attention and careful study and research; in the meantime some machinery to check excessive exploitation seems urgently called for.

Until last year no separate figures of the export of reptile skins were officially maintained, but during the year ending 31st March 1952, 1,321,367 reptile skins valued at Rs. 36,02,338 were exported from India, which is a significant revelation.—EDS.]

#### 17. EXTENSION OF RANGE OF THE FISH *RASBORA LABIOSA* (MUKERJI)

Three specimens of *Rasbora labiosa* Mukerji, were obtained on September 4th, 1951, while collecting carp fry at Budali in the Orsang river, a tributary of Narbada.<sup>6</sup> These specimens were found in association with *Danio* (*Brachydanio*) *rerio*, *Lepidocephalichthys guntea*, *Barilius bendelisis* and some *Barbus* species. The characteristic hypertrophied condition of the lip, forming a broad loose membrane round the lower lip, and rounded caudal lobes made the identification of the species easy. This species was first described by Mukerji (1935) from collections made by Dr. A. G. Fraser at Deolali, Nasik District, where he obtained specimens from a nullah flowing into the river Darna. The area drained by the Godavari basin was considered its geographical limit of distribution. *Rasbora labiosa* Mukerji, has been recovered in Baroda for the first time. Its occurrence at Baroda thus extends the geographical limit of distribution of the species in a north-west direction.

Dr. A. G. Fraser (1935), describing the locality states, 'the pools in which the fish are found are grown thickly with water weeds and the floor is covered with silt deposit brought down from time to time'. The place of capture of specimens collected by me differs, however, considerably from that given in Dr. Fraser's description. The specimens were obtained from pools formed in the bed of the

river where the water was clear and practically free from vegetation, the bottom being sandy.

Dr. Hora (1935) records in a footnote 'Darna is a tributary of the Godavari river. Annandale [*Rec. Ind. Mus.* (1919) pp. 109-161,] in his account of the fauna of certain small streams in the Bombay Presidency, made observations on the collections made at Medha in Satara District and Khandala in Poona District. Both these places are far away from the Godavari drainage basin. The new species would thus appear to have a somewhat localised distribution.' The occurrence of *Rasbora labiosa* Mukerji, at Baroda shows, however, that the species does not have a localised distribution as stated by Hora.

The specimens were caught with an ordinary rectangular drag net. The biggest specimen measured 75 mm. It is quite likely that the place of capture may be a normal habitat of the fish, as smaller specimens of 30 mm. were also obtained in the same area. The collected specimens resemble closely the illustration given by Hora and Mukerji (1935) except for a slight variation in coloration. The broad black band along the middle of the body, from the angle of the opercles to the root of the tail, described by them was, in our specimens, found to arise from the tip of the snout and extend to the middle of the caudal fin. The other characters resemble the type specimen.

Hora and Mukerji (1935) referred to the hypertrophied condition of the lip as follows. 'Among the functions assigned to the hypertrophied lip in the tadpoles, there is that of buoyancy, for the tadpoles are supposed to use it to hang from the surface film. It is quite possible that the new species, which are essentially surface fishes, also use their expanded lip for the mechanical process of suspending themselves, from the surface of the film, when the water in their habitat becomes foul for ordinary process of respiration'. Our specimens were secured, however, from pools with clear water and without much vegetation, where the specialisation of a hypertrophied lip was of little practical use for suspension.

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#### REFERENCES

1. Day, F. (1889): Fauna of British India.
2. Hora, S. L. & Mukerji, D. D. (1935): *Rec. Ind. Mus.*, xxxvii; 375.

## 18. GROWTH OF CATLA IN TANKS

(With a photo)

Catla is one of our most important fishes for development of pisciculture and is noted for the large size it attains. There is, however, a serious lack of data on its extreme variability in the rate of growth under different ecological conditions and the age of large specimens, viz. above 20 lb. in weight, which are not ordinarily fattened in fish